

INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION

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Press release

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ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships #WorldSpeed

Ireen Wüst has won the inaugural race at the Gangneung Olympic Oval. With exactly one year to go to the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympic Games, the Dutchwoman took gold in the Ladies' 3000m at the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships. Sven Kramer won his eighth 5000m World Title, with bronze Peter Michael taking the first ever World Speed Skating Championships medal for New-Zealand.

Olympic champion takes back World Title in Ladies' 3000m

Wüst was the first of the favorites to take the ice in the fifth pair versus home favorite Bo-Reum Kim. After the first four pairs, Wüst's compatriot Yvonne Nauta had the fastest time with 4:02.56.

Wüst started with a superfast first full lap in 29.8 and had gradually increasing lap times, finishing with a final 33.3 lap. She was the first to break the four minute barrier, with the clock stopping at 3:59.05. "I'm satisfied with this race, I gave everything", she said. Kim was fast too, breaking her own Korean national record with 4:03.85 to end up in sixth place.

After Wüst's explosion Martina Sáblíková (CZE) did not really believe she could retain her title. "When I saw her [Wüst's] time, honestly, I aimed at 4:02. To go under four minutes... I only did that once in my lifetime. I did not think I could [beat Wüst's time], but during the race I felt good and I tried for sure."

Sáblíková came close. Contrary to her Dutch rival, the Czech title defender kept her lap times flat. After a first 30.2, she set five sub 32 laps to finish with a 32.1 lap in 3:59.65, just 0.60 short of Wüst, who had a difficult time watching her opponent race. "I was in the warm-up room, when I saw her 30.2 first full lap and I knew I was not going to keep my nerve watching together with all those people around. I went to the locker room, there's no television and no lap times, but I saw her final laps from the infield. It was really tight." Sáblíková finished in 3:59.65. "I'm satisfied, Ireen deserved this win", she said.

After Sáblíková's race Wüst still was not sure of the title however. "Antoinette [De Jong] can also skate a very fast 3.000m", she said. De Jong did skate fast, but she had to settle for bronze in 4:01.99. "This was a good race", she said. "I'm happy that I was able to show a good race with the pressure on, after the others had set the bar." De Jong said she had changed race tactics this season. "I used to go all-out from the start, and now I try to start with a decent lap to keep my lap times flat and to keep focusing on technique."

Wüst added a third 3000m World Title after gold medals in 2011 and 2013. Sáblíková won the 3000m title four times (2007, 2012, 2015 and 2016). Both Ladies' now target next year's Olympic Games at the same track. Sáblíková won in 2010, but Wüst took Olympic gold in 2006 and 2014.

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Kramer still king of the 5000m

Sven Kramer held off Jorrit Bergsma to win his eighth 5000m World Title. The defending champion and his long time challenger were pair mates and fought a neck-on-neck battle. Bergsma had to bow his head when Kramer accelerated from 29 laps to 28 laps after the 3000m split. Kramer stopped the clock at 6:06.82 and Bergsma skated 6:09.33.

Before the race Bergsma said that he was happy to be paired to Kramer, but afterwards he admitted that he might have skated faster if he would have drawn someone else. "But I always want to become better and I hope to learn from races like these. The best thing would be to beat him one day in a one-on-one race," Bergsma said.

Although all eyes were on the two Dutch arch rivals, Kramer said the 5000m was by no means a two horse race. "Jorrit is a strong skater, but Ted-Jan Bloemen won the 5000m at the last World Cup in Berlin and there's a couple more skaters who can do well."

One of those skaters was Peter Michael. The 27-year-old inline champion from New Zealand broke his personal best (6:15.19) in spectacular fashion to set a new national record in 6:11.67. After his race Michael had to wait and see, with Kramer and Bergsma in the penultimate pair and Bloemen in the final pair. "I watched the races together with my coach and I could only hope that my time was good enough," Michael said.

Bloemen started at the same pace, but whereas Kramer accelerated after 3000m and both Bergsma and Michael managed to keep their lap times flat, Bloemen couldn't maintain his pace. The Canadian had to settle for fifth place in 6:14.73, a full second behind fourth ranked Dutchman Douwe de Vries (6:13.70), who was paired to Michael. "I was nervous when Bloemen went out so fast," Micheal said: "But in the last part I was watching a little more comfortable."

Michael thinks there might be more in store for him: "This year has been really good, and I knew that if I skated a good one it could be a medal." Many skaters noted a tailwind at the Gangneung Oval and Michael was asked about it too. He said: "My technique is not down perfect like some of the other skaters, so I don't think I get the same bonus some of the others do. But I'm always looking to improve, also on my inline technique. It's going to be an endless journey on the ice and everything is possible. I never put a limit on anything."

Although Kramer was happy with his eighth 5000m World Title, he said it was just the confirmation of the hard work he had done over the years. "That's where I get my real satisfaction. The long road leading up to a race like this, is more important than this final week." Kramer plans to continue this hard work looking forward to the 2018 Olympic Games on the same track. "365 days is far away. Of course it's my goal, not only the 5000m, but also the 10,000m, the Team Pursuit and maybe a bonus 1500m," he concluded at the press conference.

For full results of the ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships 2017 please refer to <http://www.isureults.eu/>

About ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships 2017

The ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships consists of single distance races. The 2017 Championships take place in Gangneung (KOR) and serves as the official test event for the 2018 PyeongChang Olympic Winter Games. The competition format will be the same at next year's Olympic Winter Games. The Ladies will compete in the 500m, 1000m, 1500m, 3000m and

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5000m, Team Pursuit and Mass start race over 16 laps. The Men's competitions are the 500m, 1000m, 1500m, 5000m, and 10000m, Team Pursuit and Mass start race over 16 laps. Mass Start will make its Olympic debut in 2018.

ISU World Single Distances Speed Skating Championships Gangneung (KOR)

Medalists Ladies 3000m

1	Ireen Wüst	NED	3:59.05
2	Martina Sáblíková	CZE	3:59.65
3	Antoinette de Jong	NED	4:01.99

Medalists 5000m

1	Sven Kramer	NED	6:06.82
2	Jorrit Bergsma	NED	6:09.33
3	Peter Michael	NZL	6:11.67 NR